

LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office  
155 Merrimack Street  
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

**William J. Samaras**  
**Mayor and Chairperson**

## **Personnel Subcommittee Meeting**

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**Jackie Doherty**  
**Vice-Chairperson**

**Wednesday, January 30, 2019**  
**City Hall – Council Chamber**  
**6:30 p.m.**

**Andre P. Descoteaux**  
**Robert J. Hoey Jr.**  
**Dominik Hok Lay**  
**Connie A. Martin**  
**Gerard Nutter**

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Connie Martin, Jackie Doherty and Robert Hoey
School Committee Members Present:	Mr. Lay
School Department Personnel Present:	Jeannine Durkin, Acting Superintendent Billie Jo Turner, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Finance

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Chairperson Connie Martin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Subcommittee update is in response to the following motion:

Motion by School Committee Member Connie Martin, which was approved at the December 5, 2018 School Committee Meeting:

“A motion to refer the Human Resources Compliance Audit to the Personnel Subcommittee”

Motion by School Committee Member Connie Martin, which was approved at the January 16, 2019 School Committee Meeting:

“A motion to refer agenda item #8.XI. Human Resource Director RFP Update to the Personnel Subcommittee for further discussion to get a sense of quotes and to see if there is some interest and to look at the job description and salary”

The following agenda items were discussed:

- **Human Resources Audit**
- **Human Resource Director**

Acting Superintendent Durkin introduced Sandy Stapczynski, President of Human Resources Services, Inc. (HRS), to discuss the audit findings with the Subcommittee. HRS was retained by the Lowell Public Schools, as directed by the School Committee to conduct a Human Resource Audit. She stated that HRS was charged with performing an assessment of the Human Resources Department's operational practices, policies/procedures, staffing levels, overall compliance, and to conduct an internal survey of HR users; those being the department heads, principals and other key management and professional staff. At the beginning of the study the consultants conducted orientation sessions with the School Department's leadership group. Two (2) sessions were conducted and included a total of fifty (50) to sixty (60) professional staff and employees. The reason for the meeting was to orient employees to the process, purpose of the study, and the importance of Human Resources in the Lowell Public Schools and as a strategic partner with the various schools and departments. Also, the orientation session survey questionnaires were distributed to employees to solicit confidential input from leadership employees. The survey was optional, and HRS received a representative example of responses needed for this analysis. The purpose of these questionnaires was to obtain a better understanding of how Lowell Public Schools Human Resource services the many departments and schools in the district. These surveys laid the ground work in our initial fact-finding tasks. Comprehensive interviews were conducted with a cross-section of key staff including department heads, principals, employees, and also with the Acting Superintendent of Schools, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Human Resource Director, Assistant Human Resource Director, HR Executive Assistant, HR Head Clerk; and the City's HR Director. The interviews were focused on gathering information to gain a deeper understanding of HR operations at Lowell Public Schools and how they relate to departments/schools, and to further understand key issues and problems.

The audit reviewed the following:

- Current and New Proposed HR Organization
- Review of Current HR Organization
- Proposed Adjustments to HR Organization
- Staffing
- Human Resource Director
- Assistant Human Resource Director
- HR Executive Assistant
- HR Administrative Support Specialist
- Human Relations Assistant (new)
- Communications
- On-Line Communications
- Develop the HR Role at Each School
- Workflow and Technology

- Hiring, Diversity and Succession Planning
- Conduct Exit Interviews
- Training
- Pay and Classification System including Job Descriptions
- Performance System for Certain Groups of Employees Still Needed
- Employee Safety in the Workplace

Ms. Stapczynski recommended the salary for a Human Resource Director be over \$100,000. She stated that an Assistant HR Director is a key position and she recognizes that it is expensive to bring on a lot of staff, but it's virtually impossible for one person to handle thirty (30) schools.

Chairperson Martin thanked Ms. Stapczynski for the report and for the very valuable information. She stated that we are rebuilding this office and her approach is to find the best inspired person/strong leader for this position and let them build their team, setting up their priorities based on their own strengths and weakness. She believes the first step needs to be hiring the HR Director and then let that person make some recommendations after reviewing the audit.

Ms. Stapczynski stated that it would be ideal if you could get the HR Director on board as soon as you can and work with them to build their staff and build their organization. She stated that you need someone who understands local government and bringing someone in from the private sector will take them some time to get caught up.

Mr. Hoey thanked her and said that he appreciated all the work she did. He stated that this audit reaffirmed what he believed.

Ms. Doherty asked about the use of the interview panels that Ms. Stapczynski talked about and how they benefited the Lowell Public Schools, but had no consistency with how they were used. She asked what else Ms. Stapczynski felt wasn't consistent.

Ms. Stapczynski stated that she thinks they're very important and recently just participated in one. You just want to make sure the district has consistency.

Ms. Doherty asked about doing exit interviews and not sure the district would have the time for that and how effective would it be doing it online.

Ms. Stapczynski said it's very effective to do it online and often times you learn something you didn't know and you may get some very good insight.

Interim Assistant Superintendent Turner stated that we have put procedures in place to address many of the issues discussed in the audit and the administration will be giving recommendations.

Mr. Hoey stated that we've been having a problem with jobs and everyone is looking for a job and he believes we need to find a different way, because we've been doing the committees for the last twenty (20) years and we've been having trouble getting stability and asked how we can take the pressure off the HR Director from having people trying to get people jobs.

Ms. Stapczynski said you're not alone and you need to have good rules and policies and procedures that are in place and that need to be followed.

Ms. Doherty stated that the report states that processes are cumbersome and asked if Ms. Stapczynski could elaborate a little more on that and how we can streamline processes.

Ms. Stapczynski stated that what she was referring to the fact that the process is not consistent and it is cumbersome in the fact that you have thirty (30) different schools with thirty (30) different needs and different types of staff. It seems like everything is bogged down, like a bottleneck.

Mr. Lay asked how she would rank the technology we have.

Ms. Stapczynski said that the district is outdated, but you're not alone and many school districts are. A lot of the district processes are still paper and the district would benefit from having a Human Resources Information System, which would keep all the information with everyone being able to see that information at one time.

- **Human Resource Director**

Chairperson Martin asked about the Human Resource Director search. Mr. Turner stated that she sought advice from the City Procurement Officer (CPO) to avoid CH30b errors due to requesting quotes for a service with unknown costs. Despite estimating that this cost may be less than \$10,000, we still choose to request quotes despite the time constraints. The CPO recommended that the district reach out to the City Human Resources Department for guidance on who they use for high level searches. The City gave us a list of names from numerous search firms to reach out to. We requested quotes from eleven (11) search firms. Of the eleven (11), the district received three (3) responses to date. One firm sent an hourly rate quote for advertising, one firm quoted 25% of the base salary which would be \$25,000 if we used an assumed \$100,000 salary and another firm quoted a flat fee of \$14,000, which is estimated to be 7.1% of the \$100,000 assumed base (this quote specified that this is a significant discount due to our budgetary constraints and also offered a thorough breakdown of what would be provided for this fee).

Chairperson Martin stated that out of the three (3) options, the most appealing is the flat fee of \$14,000 and she really believes we need the external firm to help us with this search. She asked Interim Assistant Superintendent Turner if she was confident with the firm that gave the 7.1% quote in terms of being able to make a recommendation to the full School Committee. She also asked if the Committee could be provided with the full scope of service so they can vote on it at the next meeting.

Acting Superintendent Durkin stated that she can have that and we will also have any additional quotes we may receive.

Chairperson Martin asked that we share all three (3) responses in the packet for full disclosure.

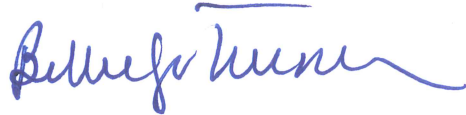
Mr. Hoey asked if Interim Assistant Superintendent Turner checked to see how helpful it was to use the same people the city uses. Mr. Hoey also likes that flat fee quote of \$14,000 and he believes the salary for an HR Director is usually around \$125,000.

Ms. Doherty stated that we can't award it until Wednesday night, so the more information we have the better and we do want to go with an outside firm that has proven expertise with hiring.

**Mr. Hoey made a motion to accept the report as a report of progress and recommend to the full School Committee the recommendations of the Administration and this Subcommittee to move forward with one of the options that will be presented to the Committee on Wednesday night (February 6, 2019) and to recommend the job description with the changes that were discussed; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 3 yeas APPROVED**

**Mr. Hoey made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 3 yeas APPROVED**

Respectfully submitted,



Billie Jo Turner, Interim Assistant  
Superintendent for Finance

BJT/mes